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USA TODAY

# For sale: Lifestyles of the rich, famous

## Celebrities offer home décor lines

By Laura Petrecca
USA TODAY

**Marketing**

After seeing the money being made by lending famous names and personal style to fashion and fragrances, a spate of celebrities now have designs on the growing home decoration market.

"We're seeing an influx of celebrities into the home décor area," says Marty Brochstein, executive editor of *The Licensing Letter*.

Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen, as well as fellow teen idol Hilary Duff, are among the names extending their brands into home fashion. Even Donald Trump told USA TODAY that he's looking at household products. His in-house licensing expert, Cathy Hoffman Glosser, says the company is reviewing proposals for Trump-branded furniture and bed and bath accessories. "People want a piece of what Donald Trump has," she says.

The home fashion entries follow the success of celebrity-branded perfumes and clothing. Stars' scents generated $95 million in sales in 2004, a 109% rise from 2000, according to tracker NPD Group. They also come as shoppers snap up famous-name merchandise: 2004 retail sales of products licensed from celebrities and the estates of stars were about $3.1 billion, up from $2.9 billion in 2003, according to *The Licensing Letter*.

Martha Stewart was a pioneer in proving that a tidy profit could be made by lending a well-known moniker to otherwise anonymous towels, sheets and toothbrush holders. This year, Stewart's company, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, reaped a minimum of $54 million in royalties from her home goods line sold at Kmart. Her company has launched a separate furniture line with Bernhardt Furniture.

Stewart's success, however, was built on more than celebrity. She has natural "brand synergy" to the home, says Deborah Needleman, editor-in-chief of decorating magazine *Domino*. "While Martha Stewart is not a furniture designer, she does know about decoration and the craftsmanship of furniture."

The lack of an obvious link to interior design, however, isn't stopping a wide range of other famous names from being drawn to home products. They're banking on their name recognition and personal image — as well as spending from die-hard fans — to help fuel sales.

Licensing and marketing experts say brand-name buzz can give cachet to such generic products such as soap dishes and bath towels. But they warn there are pitfalls — especially if celebrities slap their names on products that don't resonate with their image and what their fans expect from them.

Representatives for the Olsen twins and Duff both say this challenge remains upfront when creating product lines. Both camps also insist the teen actresses are integrally involved in product design and say that quality merchandise is key to sales success.

"Teens and tweens aspire to be like Hilary — they are interested in products that are designed and sanctioned by her," says Robert Thorne, who handles brand management for Duff. "But at the end of the day, it has to be great or terrific, or no amount of celebrity will (be able to) support a successful line."

As star-backed home décor grows, *Domino* editor Needleman wonders how much the market will bear. "It's definitely a huge trend — the branding and brand extensions — but how far will it go?"

Then again, she says in reference to Trump's pending lines, maybe there are consumers in the market for "an extravagant, dealmaking mogul vibe in their living room."

Among celebrities who want to go home with their fans:

▸ **Hollywood starlets.** Duff is launching a Stuff by Hilary Duff line that includes area rugs, lamps and ottomans. The line will expand to bedroom furniture in 2007.

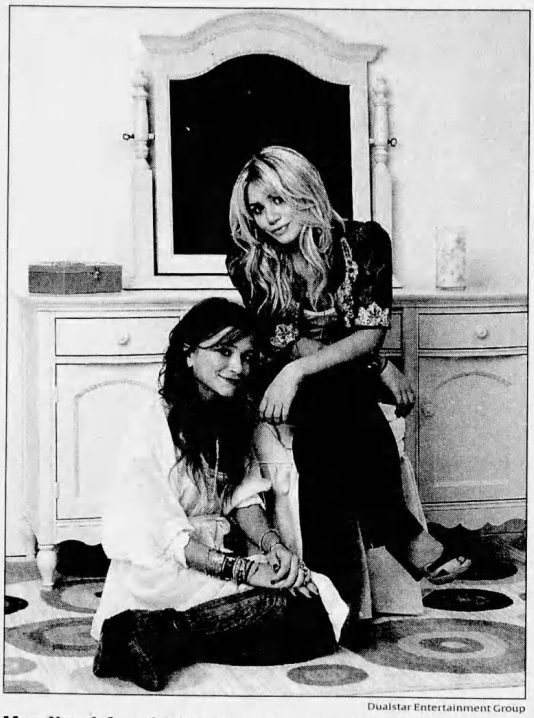
The Olsen twins' signature furniture line is geared to girls ages 4 to 18. This year, they expect to roll out more home items, says Diane Reichenberger, CEO of Dualstar, the twins' company.

"We know there's an opportunity in this market," she says. "Ashley and Mary Kate really have the pulse on what they like and what their fans would like."

Retail industry expert Marshal Cohen of the NPD Group says the younger set will likely respond. "Kids today are looking at decorating and renovating their rooms — obviously, with their parents' money," he says. "The home has become one of the fastest-growing components of the younger market — and the celebrity component is critical to that."

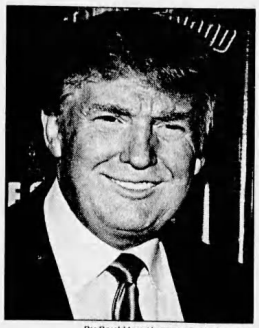
▸ **Manly men.** For the armchair quarterback in search of comfort, Hall of Famer John Elway is shilling signature sofas and recliners, as well as massive entertainment units that can hold large-screen TVs. Detroit Red Wings hockey legend Steve Yzerman has a furniture line.

▸ **Sex symbols.** Jaclyn Smith, who made the transition from a Charlie's Angel to Kmart fashion brand, has a Jaclyn Smith Home line that includes bedding, furniture and wall coverings. Supermodel Kathy Ireland, who got started in licensing with a line of socks and moved into other apparel, is now marketing home products such as area rugs, window coverings and signature salad bowls.



Dualstar Entertainment Group

**Mary Kate, left, and Ashley Olsen:** The twins' signature furniture line, including the pieces below, is geared to girls ages 4 to 18.



By Paul Hawthorne, Getty Images

**Donald Trump:** His company is looking at household products.

By Kevin Winter, Getty Images

**Hilary Duff:** She's launching a Stuff by Hilary Duff line.

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